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STATE FOR PRM/A, GENEVA FOR RMA

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SUBJECT: PRM A/S DEWEY'S DISCUSSIONS WITH OPE

1. Summary: A/S Dewey and the Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) Representative and Staff held fruitful discussions during the recent trip by A/S Dewey to W. Africa. Touching on issues related to 9/11, new caseloads, partner relations, efforts to meet the FY 04 ceiling as well as the many benefits of WRAPS, Dewey was presented with a thorough debriefing of OPE operations in the region. Positive words of appreciation and encouragement by A/S Dewey were well-received and bolstered team efforts to move another 3,000 refugees by October 1. End Summary.

2. During a representational dinner, OPE Director Frances Tinsley and A/S Dewey discussed a myriad of issues related to OPE processing in the region. The two focused on three general areas of concern: 1) USRP progress made since 9/11 on moving cases out of West Africa, 2) the need for new caseloads and 3) partner relations. All three points were of keen interest to the Assistant Secretary and are detailed below.

3. 9/11 - Getting over the Hurdles. Due to the hiatus in processing following the events of 9/11, numerous hurdles arose as the Department struggled to address security concerns related to the refugee program. Tinsley emphasized that in the last year, the process had picked up great speed as many 9/11 related policies had been ironed out. The eventual normalization of the RAVU process between Washington DHS, OPE and RPC was welcomed recently by all and proved instrumental in resolving the fate of thousands of refugees in limbo. While the movement on RAVU policy assisted in breaking the logjam, partner efforts were redoubled to address those cases that had been stuck at various stages throughout the year. Underscoring the importance and success of the individual trouble-shooting partner meetings, the myriad of concerns have eventually ameliorated. Partners continue to convene weekly to scrutinize SOPs and dislodge cases through meetings on IOM/OPE data reconciliation, cases that fall through the cracks, displaced refugees from Ivory Coast and DHS policy issue and practical processing meetings.

4. The Need for New Caseloads - Our Pipeline Runs Dry. Tinsley mentioned the increased competition for cases in West Africa by other refugee resettlement countries. The number of missions now based in Ghana, competing for the same caseloads as the US Government include the British and Canadians with the Australians preparing to establish a presence next year. In identifying new group referrals, Tinsley urged A/S Dewey to push for more initial involvement with OPE in order to avoid the numerous problems associated with the Abidjan operation. A/S Dewey mentioned the need to move processing more towards a "rescue mission" as opposed to bigger P-2 programs of the past. Noting there is now a more urgent need to have OPE process quickly in designated places, Tinsley assured A/S Dewey that OPE was up to the task, as evidenced by its recent trip to the North of Ghana to pre-screen 400 Sierra Leoneans from Krisan camp. Tinsley made a pitch to allow OPE to process Visas 93s in the region as opposed to Accra only. (Comment: This proposal was presented by Refcoord to PRM and DHS last year and while plausible to PRM, appeared a non-starter with DHS Rome and Washington. End comment).

5) Partner Relations - A Tone of Collaboration. Expressing appreciation for Refcoord's past efforts, Tinsley emphasized the need for continuity upon the appointment of the new refcoord. Outlining the accomplishments of the current refcoord, Tinsley kindly attributed the tone for the partner's collaboration to Nadeau. Specifically, Tinsley outlined partner efforts to find unlocatable cases (many lost during the Ivorian civil disturbances) throughout the region that had been sitting for months and sometimes years. While these numbers do not represent a significant number of cases, the effort to locate and process from a wide variety of locations enforced partners' needs to work collaboratively to move difficult caseloads. Discussing how OPE has become the "clearing house" for data exchange with the partner's given the advent of

WRAPS and the thoroughness of OPE pre/post efforts, this exchange has encouraged a collegial approach to processing by all partners.

6) A/S Dewey toured OPE viewing every corner of the operation and providing strong words of encouragement to staff along the way. In a general meeting with senior staff, a question and answer session ensued with thoughtful discussion on the need to have written guidance from Washington in a timely manner, the possibility of resettling Sudanese refugees and the overall efforts made to increase departures to meet the fiscal year ceiling of 8,500. The OPE team wholeheartedly supported the RPC and WRAPS, saying it simplifies their work efforts tremendously. Dewey received the new positively stating he was pleased to see the team embrace WRAPS. The meeting ended with a mutual note of appreciation from OPE staff for the Assistant Secretary's visit.

17. Comment. Tinsley and OPE staff were clearly pleased and appreciative of the A/S's visit, mentioning at numerous occasions the impact his encouraging words had on staff. While the pressure has been on West Africa to bring in numbers, the hurdles presented have been met at every stage by OPE staff who have worked tirelessly to overcome them. This was an opportune time to illustrate those efforts to the Assistant Secretary. End comment.

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